



the family values toolkit

For Children Ages 14 to 18

This Month's Featured Value Is: **Respect**

Respect refers to the belief that other people have as much worth and dignity as oneself, and deserve to be treated with care and courtesy. A person can also feel respect for property, institutions, relationships, and the environment. While respect is often equated with good manners, the core of the behavior goes deeper than politeness. It stems from the feeling that harming others, trampling on their rights, and defacing property are inherently wrong.

What Can Parents Do to Nurture This Important Value?



First, Set Goals:

Help teens begin to use moral reasoning to become respectful participants in the adult world.

To the chagrin of their parents, teenagers work out many of their internal struggles in public. They overtly show disrespect, speaking nastily to parents and flagrantly disobeying rules. Parents need to realize, however, that by trying out these behaviors, teens are trying to find the answers to some key questions: Who am I? What will I become? What around me truly matters, and therefore deserves my respect?

Parents also need to be aware that teenagers are sensitive. A teen who feels rejected, unpopular, or unsuccessful may likely have little respect for him or herself, which may lead him or her to test out more destructive behaviors (such as drinking or taking drugs). As they reach maturity, teens begin to identify with adults and look ahead to their adult roles. This increases their respect for parents and for those who already know how to function in the world of which they will soon be a part.

Next, Take Action! Try These Activities:

- ✓ **Encourage your teen to spend time with an elderly neighbor, nursing home patient, or family member.** Emphasize how the elderly deserve our respect.
- ✓ **Talk to your teens about how they cannot respect others before they respect themselves and their bodies,** that substance abuse and being sexually promiscuous are self-respect issues.
- ✓ **Have your teen create a series of cartoons for younger kids comparing different kinds of interactions between people.** In one frame, they could show a situation in which the people are behaving disrespectfully; in the second frame, the same situation but with respectful behavior. Photocopy for younger siblings or put on the bulletin board at your house of worship. (Adapted from "What Do You Stand For?" by Barbara A. Lewis, published by Free Spirit Publishing.)

Then, Report Back!

Share your stories of success, your challenges, and overall experiences with others in our community @

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